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MR. ALLEN'S SPEECH

ON

MINISTERS LEAVING A MORAL KINGDOM

TO

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BEAR TESTIMONY AGAINST SIN;

LIBERTY IN DANGER,

FROM

THE PUBLICATION OF ITS PRINCIPLES;

THE

CONSTITUTION A SHIELD FOR SLAVERY;

AND

THE UNION

BETTER THAN

FREEDOM AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

BOSTON:

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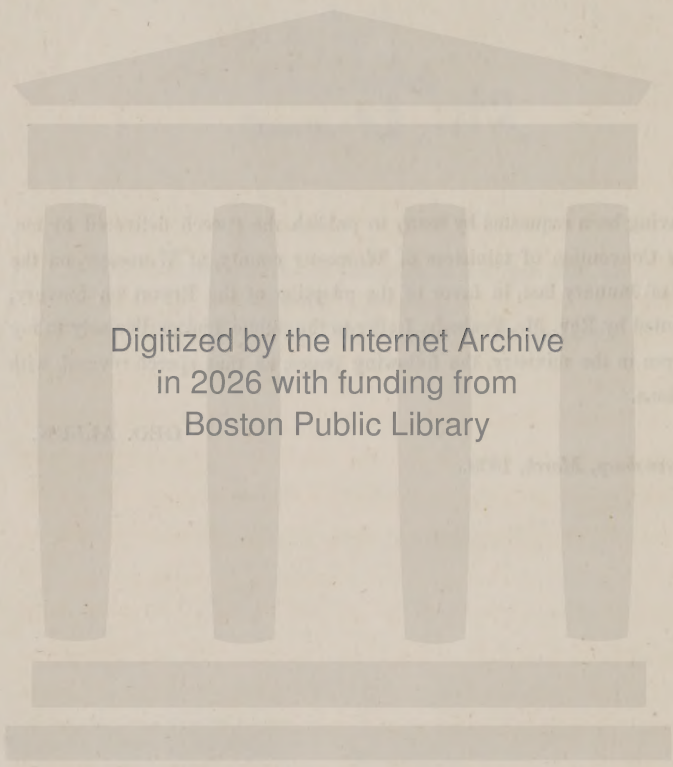
Having been requested by many to publish the speech delivered by me, at the Convention of ministers of Worcester county, at Worcester, on the 16th of January last, in favor of the adoption of the Report on Slavery, presented by Rev. Mr. Peabody, I offer to the public, and particularly to my brethren in the ministry, the following pages, as that speech revised, with additions.

GEO. ALLEN.

Shrewsbury, March, 1838.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SPEECH.

Mr. President:

I read the deep interest taken in the question before this Convention, in the general aspect of its members, and in the solemn stillness of the respectable assembly which throng the place of our deliberations; and, if I do not greatly mistake, I find in this hall no unfaithful index of the interest felt in the large community in which Divine Providence has cast our lot. I cannot, nor would I, disguise the deep feelings of my own heart which have brought me hither, which the progress of this debate calls forth, and which look forward to the vote that shall be taken on the momentous subject of slavery.

I could wish that, while we all profess to have the same deep sense of the sin of slavery, there might be equal harmony in making public, through this Convention, the sentiments which we privately entertain. This unanimous public expression of our sentiments it seems evident we may not expect, and, as appearances are such, I hope no member will feel the less free to declare his thoughts to the world because others may think it expedient to withhold theirs.

Before, however, the question of adopting the Report of your Committee shall be taken, I wish to offer some remarks on the chief

objections urged, for the rejection of that Report, against our taking a public, and particularly a united stand against slavery as it exists in the United States. If, in so doing, I shall take up more time than is allowed by the rule of this Convention, I shall throw myself on its indulgence, thinking it to be economy of time for one to say what, without this indulgence, would probably be said by several.

The first objection which I shall take notice of is that a minister, in publicly expressing his sentiments on slavery, leaves his appropriate sphere of duty. I should defer greatly to the cautious and experienced sagacity of him* who has added to this objection the weight of his venerated years, were I disposed to neglect the inspired lesson which in my early days I often heard from his lips, and which has been signally exemplified in his life, to "call no man master on earth." It is said, in so many words applied to the question before us, "the moral kingdom is the sphere in which ministers ought to move," and, to enforce this precept, the language of our divine Master is cited, "my kingdom is not of this world." It is not to the precept, nor is it to the authority cited in support of it that I object; but it is to the new relations which are here given them — it is to the exclusion of the momentous subject of slavery from the concerns of a moral kingdom — it is to the fact that the language of our Saviour is used as authority to keep us from bearing our public testimony against a sin so great and glaring that all are constrained to see and acknowledge it.

The history of our Saviour's statement respecting his kingdom is brief, and bears forcibly on the question before us. When our Lord was brought, by the malice of his enemies, before Pilate, and was asked by him whether he were the king of the Jews, he an-

* Mr. Allen sat, for many years, under the ministry of the member who offered the objection.

swered, "my kingdom is not of this world;" and gave, as proof of this, the fact that it was not maintained by physical force. Pilate again asked him if he were a king; to which question our Lord replied in the affirmative, adding, both as confirmation and explanation of his regal office, "to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should *bear witness unto the truth.*" Nor are we left in doubt respecting the truths to which he testified; that, while they related to the future and invisible world, they related also to the corruption and oppression of this; for our Lord had told his familiar disciples, in the early part of his ministry, the cause of that malice which at length brought him to the tribunal of Pilate, saying, "me the world hateth, because I *testify* of it that *its works are evil.*"

Though we follow our Lord a great way off, I yet inquire what "cause" has brought us hither? What "end" do we aim at? Is it not "to express our sentiments on the subject of slavery?" Is it not to "testify" our belief that slavery is an "evil work?" Is it not to bear our joint testimony against a sin of daring and appalling magnitude? And who shall say that, in so doing, we leave a moral kingdom — that we wander out of our sphere? Or shall such an assertion, by whomsoever, or how confidently soever made, deter any one from the purpose contemplated by the call of this Convention? Shall it create a moment's misgiving? Are we not manifestly within the limits of our office? Would it not be wandering from the path of duty, if, for such cause, we should reject the Report of your committee and leave our purpose unaccomplished?

I know, sir, that, to give force to the objection, it is said, the subject of slavery is political, and is connecting itself with the movements of political parties. This I do not altogether deny, though

I do not by any means admit its political, to be its exclusive or most prominent character. The objection is insinuating and plausible, but it seems to me to be destitute of that soundness without which it cannot have weight. This great subject, which now so much and so justly occupies the public mind, is of a mixed character. It partakes of morals and of politics. It is essentially moral: it is incidentally political. It has become more or less interwoven with the politics of the day, and some political aspirants, it may be, are desirous that, like all other great subjects which attract the public mind, it should subserve their private interests. But this fact, if it be a fact, does not change the original character of the subject before us. It does not make it any the less a moral subject, and thereby throw it out of the sphere of direct moral influence from the ministers of a moral kingdom. If it is in itself a moral subject, the floating incidents of politics cannot jostle it from its sphere.

It is of the very nature of political ambition to hunt for influence in all quarters, and to throw itself, if possible, on all great currents of the public mind. But this fact does not change a minister's position in respect to the commands of God, and the duties of men to their Maker and to each other. It neither annihilates nor contracts the sphere of his duty. If that sphere undergoes any change whatever, it is an enlargement rather than a diminution: at least, the fact that any great sin, in addition to its accustomed and steady interests, finds a new ally in the interests of political ambition, is a new demand on the minister of Christ that he the more sternly rebuke it. What does the principle assumed in the objection amount to? It is this, that any sin whatever may take shelter under the wing of politics, and that, having gained a place there, the minister of truth may not touch it — may not speak to it

nor of it. It is a principle that goes to defeat the purpose of the Christian ministry; a principle that, if carried out, would annihilate the kingdom of Christ, and spread, without limit, the empire of Satan. What are the practical details into which this principle would lead us? Let it be once but well settled, and it would have strength enough to demolish every pulpit in the land, and the last sound of the gospel would die away from the earth. What sin would not rally its friends, organize them politically, and trench, one after another, on a moral kingdom till the whole should be partitioned into the kingdom of this world.

We find, at least in one place, a party formed, not of large dimensions at present, but yet an organized party large enough to be watched, whose aim is, among other things, to abolish the institution of marriage — to put asunder what God hath joined together; to do that, which, if done, would break up the foundations of society and let loose the bond that ties the world together. That party is political, and carries whatever of force it can gather to the decision of the ballot-box. Is the ballot-box therefore the ark of refuge for pollution? Does the minister of Christ thereby lose his holy function? May he no longer publish the law of God or array its denunciations against the sin of licentiousness?

A party has sprung up, that may possibly increase, who wish to raise themselves, by unrighteous means, above the level to which profligacy of morals has sunk them. It is by bringing down those above them and throwing all on a level to-day where all cannot be to-morrow. They call, as loudly as even their impudence yet dares, for a division of other men's property for the common behoof. Give them their wish and they would empty the coffers of the enterprising and frugal merchant and mechanic, and cut up the farm of the thrifty yeoman, to scramble in the common stock and

supply the wants of idleness and prodigality. They too are politicians. They go, with all the troop they can muster, to the polls. They are politicians of the fiercest school, such men as would have graced the cohorts of Catiline, clamorous from morning till night for the honest earnings of prudent industry. Does their greediness for other men's gains find protection under the cover of politics? Have they clamored down the law of God at the ballot-box? Have they, by political concert, shut out the ministration of the command, "thou shall not covet anything that is thy neighbor's?"

It cannot justly be said that the question is affected by the present number of the party which is thus political. Present dimensions may grow. The actual and the possible may be one. Besides, the principle of the objection is universal, and covers all dimensions. And who, in either of these instances of political organization, would not break through such a theory to save a land from plunder and pollution? Who, that cares for the rights and welfare of men, would have the hardihood to deny to a Christian ministry the duty, as far as in it lies, singly or by scores, to forestall the growth of such a party, or, if already great, to level against it the whole artillery of a moral kingdom? Whoever else would, he who has raised this objection would not.

And what is slavery but a system, on a scale of fearful magnitude, of rapine and licentiousness? It does not, indeed, throw private property, the hard earnings of individuals, into the common stock. It seeks not to equalize the condition of men as to property, but to create, by the sternest oppression, the utmost possible difference among them. Nor does it limit this difference to mere property. It extends it to every circumstance of being, to the powers and aspirations of the immortal mind. It keeps back, year

after year to the last sand of life, the earnings of the laborer that hath reaped down the fields. It allows its subject neither house nor land, neither wife nor children, neither body nor soul.

The subject of slavery, then, whatever may be said of its political relations, is fraught with morals. It comprehends the strongest and the holiest obligations. We cannot throw a glance upon it without seeing how intimate is its connection with all that makes up the law and the prophets, the judgments and the mercies of God. In this view of the question, the minister of Christ, so far from being barred out of, is shut up to the duty of proclaiming the testimony of God against oppression. If because the subject of slavery is of a mixed character, or, rather, may be viewed and acted upon in two aspects, it proves anything for the objection, it proves too much. If because a question is partly of morals and partly of politics, it is argued that a minister may not touch the part that is moral, with equal force may it be argued that a statesman may not touch the part that is political because of the part that is moral. On the principle of the objection, if either, by so doing goes out of his sphere, the other departs from his, and the great question, of more than a nation's concern, is pent up within a magic circle, over whose limits neither prophet nor people is suffered to pass.

But, after all, the Report of your committee regards the subject of slavery only in its moral aspect and relations. This is its direct aim. It has no object beyond or aside from this. It proposes no political action. None is more sensible than we that a minister has nothing to gain, either to himself or to his mission, from the ambitious strife of political party: and, if we have anything to lose by it, I trust we are prepared to suffer loss rather than forego the plain duty of our calling, in respect to the subject which has

brought us together, or in respect to any other subject. Should prejudices be industriously awakened against us; should evil surmisings be whispered in the ear in closets, or whined abroad from the house-tops; should jealousies be untiringly fomented by such as are skillful in turning to their own account the ignorance, the credulity, or the base passions of others; should any or all of these weapons press upon us to trench upon our calling, I trust that, cost what it may, it will only make us bolder in pressing the claims of God and urging the rights and duties of men.

The theory offered as an obstacle to our acting on the subject before us, having no authority in reason, finds no support from the holy scriptures, or from the history of the reformations which have been wrought since the sacred canon was completed. I the more earnestly call attention to this point, because we are here gravely assured that, in acting, as ministers, on a subject which so involves politics, we act "without a precedent," an assertion which, coming from any responsible quarter, would be strange, but which, coming from the source it does, is passing strange.

Looking back into the distant ages of the prophets, we find that they were commissioned to denounce, with unsparing severity, sins cherished even by the throne, identified with the reigning policy of successive kings, and diffused like leaven throughout the whole lump of society. Nor did they fail to utter terrible denunciations against the very sin, though in a less appalling form, which it seems we may not publicly touch, lest, in so doing, we move out of our proper sphere. I know it may be said that the Jewish government was peculiar, that it was a theocracy, and that the prophets had a special warrant for the course which they pursued. Admit all this, and what does it prove? It shows only what were the view and will of God respecting sins which can have but one

character, whatever may be the form or administration of government, and however commissioned they may be who bear the testimony of the Lord.

Coming down to the period when the theocracy so called was virtually supplanted, when Judea was reduced to a tributary province of the imperial power of Rome, what was the example of Him whose saying it is, "my kingdom is not of this world," and who both circumscribed and illumined the sphere in which his ministers should move? In the midst of a corrupt and perverse public sentiment respecting the institution of marriage, against the settled policy of his nation, and the will of those whose authority was yet suffered to linger out a decrepid life, our divine Master undertook to reinstate that fallen institution in its original purity and beneficence.

When, in obedience to the command of their risen Lord, the apostles of Christ went forth and preached everywhere the gospel of the kingdom which is not of this world, in the face of persecution they preached against "domestic institutions" wrought with subtle care into the very frame-work of civil government, and guarded with all the jealousy of despotic and vindictive power. Even in fierce and tumultuous Athens, where idolatry was rife almost beyond belief, where it had, from the beginning, been the state's great care, Paul asserted and proved the being and attributes of God who made the world and all things therein, and of one blood all nations of men. He disputed in the market-place daily with them that met with him, and called to repentance the idle and excitable multitude congregated on Mars' hill, and the magistrate himself in whose presence he stood there arraigned as a setter forth of false gods.

What were the battles which, in the sixteenth century, Luther

waged in Germany, in behalf of all men and for all time, but battles against political power in its true name, and the same power cloaked under the disguise of spiritual domination. When the triple crown of Leo X and the imperial diadem of Charles V were leagued against the reformation of institutions long wedded to the state; when the political interests both of Rome and the empire were thwarted by the principles of the Reformation; when those high powers were bent with their united strength to force that obstacle out of the path of their political career; when, for this purpose, the edict of the emperor, framed by the confederate princes of Germany, was sent forth with the thunder of the Vatican against the devoted life of the reformer, did he accommodate his embassy to the wants or the threats of political power? Did he fling up his commission and slink back from the lowering storm into the cell of his deserted cloister? Had he bowed to the theory that morals must submit to politics, the glorious light that broke forth on Germany and on other parts of Europe, and which has shed its beams so widely and benignly on this land, had been quenched as it rose out of the thick darkness, and the world had been palled in a deeper and more settled night than that which had so long and gloomily hung over it.

And what was the theory, what the practice of the pilgrim ministers of New-England? Read their theory in their privations and sufferings endured for their unbending resistance to the encroachment of civil power on natural and inalienable rights. And who, that is familiar with the early history of the colony of Massachusetts, does not know that wherever a pulpit was set up, the sanctuary rang with the notes of civil as well as religious liberty. I do not say that their views of either civil or religious liberty were always right. I rather wonder that they did so much which

deserves our gratitude and our imitation—that they had so far the start of the world, encumbered as they were with its habits and examples of tyranny. Whatever any may deny to them, all will concede that, having suffered much in defence of the liberties of mankind, they did much, and with great precision of forecast, to establish those liberties on a foundation which coming ages might not shake. Nor will it be denied that whatever they accomplished in behalf of freedom was done by the strength of the principle that morals, including the natural rights of man, are the basis of civil government, and that to allow the foundation to be undermined is to bring into ruin all that is reared upon it. Nor were their efforts vain. The principles of liberty which they personally defended, at such sacrifice, which they were so anxious to keep alive in the mass of society, and in which they incorporated the infant mind, came safely down to the period when the American Revolution began another era in the history of mankind. That revolution was the opening of a great political drama, which we believe will end only with the political regeneration of the world. And how far would that political revolution have turned, had not the ministry of New-England put its shoulder to the wheel? To this question let the Coopers, and the Chaunceys, the Thatchers, the Mayhews, and the Lathrops* of our metropolis in its better days, reply. Let those tones of fearless instruction and fervent intercession in behalf of civil liberty which rang from almost every pulpit in New-England, reply. Let the venerated names of Dwight, Trumbull, Spring, Robbins, Thaxter, Allen, and other chaplains in the army of the Revolution, reply. Though dead they speak: nor will

* These distinguished ministers of Boston were, with others, intimate counselors with Adams, Otis, Hancock, and Warren, and eminently instrumental in bringing on the Revolution.

their voices cease to be heard on the hills and in the vales of New-England, till the spirit of Independence shall forsake the soil wet with the first blood of her martyrs.

What thought our political fathers on this subject? To this question they give no vague reply. Let me cite a passage from the prologue to that drama of which I have just spoken. It was uttered by that provincial Congress of which John Hancock was President, Benjamin Lincoln, Secretary, and Samuel Adams and Joseph Hawley were master-spirits. In their session at Cambridge, December 6, 1774, but a few months before the first blood of the Revolution was spilt, they addressed, by special proclamation, the ministers of the colony of Massachusetts in these words:

"In a day like this, when all the friends of civil and religious liberty are exerting themselves to deliver this country from its present calamities, we cannot but place great hope in an order of men who have ever distinguished themselves in their country's cause; and do therefore recommend to the ministers of the gospel in the several towns and other places in this colony, that they assist us in avoiding that *dreadful slavery* with which we are now threatened."

Was there no response to this call? Hear it. It comes in that solemn pause between the fight of Lexington and the battle in which Warren consecrated, with his blood, the heights of Charlestown to the liberties of mankind. It was uttered in CONVENTION, and was in these words:

"To the Hon. Joseph Warren, Esq., President of the Provincial Congress of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay.

"Sir: We, the pastors of the Congregational churches of Massachusetts Bay, in our present annual convention, beg leave to express the grateful sense we have of the regard shown by the honorable Provincial Congress to us, and the *encouragement* * they have been pleased to afford to our *assembly as a body* this day.

* The Congress adjourned to accommodate the Convention with a place for meeting.

"Deeply impressed with a sympathy for the distress of our *much injured and oppressed* country, we are not a little relieved in beholding the representatives of the people, chosen by their free and unbiassed suffrage, now *met to concert measures for their relief and defence*, in whose wisdom and integrity, under the smiles of Divine Providence, we cannot but express our entire confidence.

"As it has been found necessary to raise an army for the common safety, and our brave countrymen have so willingly offered themselves to this hazardous service, we are not insensible of the vast burden that their necessary maintenance must induce upon the people; we therefore cannot forbear, upon this occasion, to offer our services to the public, and to signify our readiness, with the consent of our several congregations, to officiate, by rotation, as chaplains to the army.

"We devoutly commend the Congress and our brethren in arms to the guidance and protection of that Providence who, from the first settlement of the country, has so remarkably appeared for the preservation of its civil and religious rights."

The call, sir, upon ministers for aid in the revolutionary struggle was not confined to the colony of Massachusetts. The Congress of the United States, at their session in May, 1778, published an address, signed by Henry Laurens, President, to the people of the United States, in which they set forth the condition of the country at that crisis, its dangers and its hopes, stating the connection between liberty and the general interests of men, and calling for the united and persevering efforts of the people to maintain their rights. In order to give certain and more extensive effect to their address, they added to it a resolution, in which we see evidence of their belief that neither the ministry nor the sanctuary were too sacred to entertain and aid the cause of civil liberty. The resolution was as follows:

"*Resolved*, That it be recommended to ministers of the gospel, of all denominations, to read, or cause to be read, immediately after divine service, the above address to the inhabitants of the United States of America, in their respective churches and chapels and other places of religious worship."

So far were the provincial or the continental Congress from thinking that the subject of human rights was no concern of a spiritual kingdom, that they would have preferred the sentiment contained in the resolutions of the town of Petersham, in this county, adopted January 4, 1773, one of which meets directly the objection before us. It is this:

"*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this town, that *a despotic, arbitrary government is the kingdom of this world* as set forth in the New Testament, and is diametrically opposed to the establishment of Christianity in a society, and has a direct tendency to sink a people into a profound state of ignorance and irreligion, and that, if we have an eye to our own and posterity's happiness, not only in this world, but in the world to come, it is our duty to oppose such a government."

And yet, Mr. President, what was the "despotic arbitrary government" which our fathers so much feared? What was the "dreadful slavery" which they so carefully sought to avoid, that they called for aid upon the whole ministry of our land? That despotism, that slavery was unshackled freedom compared with the horrible bondage to which two millions of our countrymen are at this moment subjected, and against which we may not bear our testimony, lest, by so doing, we forsake our appointed sphere, we desert a spiritual kingdom!

I now call your attention to an extract from a sermon* delivered in 1772, which, it seems to me, bears with no little force on the objection before us.

"As my audience at this General Convention consists of clergymen, legislators and the principal inhabitants of America, I shall address the different classes.

* This extract is taken from the *Massachusetts Spy*, of February 18, 1773. It was copied into that paper from the *Providence Gazette*, of January 2, of the same year. In this paper it was published as an extract from a sermon

"My brethren in the ministry, our work is always great and infinitely important, and in this evil day the voice of wisdom cries loudly to ministers to watch and labor with double diligence and ardor for the souls of men. We are bound by the command of God to watch for the temporal as well as spiritual salvation of the people. As our duty with regard to the latter is often urged from the desk, I shall chiefly urge the former. It is a truth not to be concealed, my brethren, that we are verily and notoriously guilty of great omission of duty. We have not, in these wicked times, borne constant and faithful testimony against the growing sins in the land — against tyranny and unfaithfulness in rulers; we have been afraid of offending them; the fear of man has brought us into the snare of sin: cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully. Doth not this curse belong to some of us? We see tyranny advancing, which is the parent of all manner of abominations, and have we cried aloud to warn the people against the dreadful evil? No; we are many of us guilty, guilty, guilty; and I believe the anger of God is kindled against us for our great neglect of duty in this matter. If our consciences condemn us, let us now engage earnestly and double our diligence in the cause of freedom and godliness. Let us teach our people not only in public, but from house to house, warning every man and beseeching every man to forsake every evil way, to practice holiness, and to support freedom and justice against growing oppression and tyranny. And as there are but few men of letters in country towns who are acquainted with the history of mankind and the destruction that tyranny has made in the world, we are bound, by the love of God and man, to set apart a day to deliver a lecture to the people of our charge, upon government and the rights of the people. This is an important duty, which every one, who is an ambassador from Him who came into the world to make us free indeed, ought immediately to put in practice. My dear brethren, this is a most weighty concern; for, as far as means are connected with the end, the eternal salvation of millions may depend on the preservation

"lately delivered in a neighboring town." The sermon was, probably, preached to the General Convention of Rhode-Island, in August, 1772, whilst the General Assembly of that colony was in session at Newport, then "largely engaged in commerce, and visited from various parts of the country for purposes of trade" — "a place to which a great many of the wealthy and higher classes of the community resorted, from the other colonies, during the summer months, as at this day, though in much smaller numbers, from other States."

of freedom! As tyranny always produces wickedness, we know not where its dreadful effects may end. I know it is often suggested that ministers of the gospel have nothing to do in civil affairs; but as I know this suggestion came from the father of lies, and is big with ruin to mankind, let us say to all opposers of truth and righteousness, the Lord rebuke thee, and go on stedfast in the name of the Lord, until we have built up the kingdom of liberty and righteousness in the world. Thus let us be faithful unto death, and the King eternal will give us a crown of glory in his kingdom of liberty and love.

"I will now address the legislators and gentlemen in civil life. Brethren, I bless God that tyranny has not yet shut my mouth nor your ears; that we may once more speak to each other of temporal and spiritual salvation. Let us work whilst life lasts, for time and death make rapid speed and will soon hurry us off the stage. Therefore what our hand findeth to do, let us do it with all our might, for we must soon bid the world farewell. The great business of life for every man is to promote the glory of God and the happiness of mankind; let this be the employment of our life, and death will be a passage to glory. My brethren, we live in an evil day; tyranny and vice, inseparable companions, make rapid progress and threaten universal ruin: therefore let the friends of God and man make a solemn stand against these fiends, and, in the name of the Most High, go forth against his and our enemies.

"The same spirit that dictates the objection against ministers instructing the people in politics, says that none but ministers should instruct the ignorant or wicked in religion, and thus, by the devices of Satan and the folly of men, we are likely to have little or no religion or liberty in the world; but the command of God binds all men, of every denomination, to support liberty and religion, and releases none from the work. We are all instructed in the book of reason, conscience, revelation: let us now obey their commands and press forward in the race of glory, for our work is infinitely important, our moments but few, and death will soon stop our pursuit! Let not the fear of man, the love of gold, the sound of honor, bribe or delude us. May we not account life itself dear, if we can secure to the present and to future generations the unsullied glory of virtue and freedom. If from right principles we can do this, we shall reap the fruit of our labors in His presence where is fullness of joy through an eternity of ages to come. Let us all, in our various spheres of life, unite with sacred ardor in promoting the honor of God and the welfare of our fellow-men, and be invincible to the ungodly enemies of freedom and virtue. Then will the eternal God of love, who delighteth in the happiness of his creatures, shine upon us in time, and crown us with glory in eternity."

Such, Mr. President, were the politics, such the morals of our fathers. It was this spontaneous intimacy of morals and politics, it was this agreement of statesmen and divines, it was this inviolable harmony of truth and freedom that began, carried forward, and gloriously completed the American Revolution. Liberty was then a high-souled principle; it was a holy sentiment; it was a triple bond of duty to self, to mankind, and to God, and, being such, God crowned it with glory and honor. Liberty dissociated from religion is divided against herself; and never, while these heaven-matched influences are divorced from each other, never, while their union is not cherished in the hearts of the people, will liberty take to herself her great power and accomplish her great work for the happiness of mankind. Blessed be God that lofty, heaven-communing spirit has not utterly forsaken our land. Since the fathers fell asleep what have we their children seen? We have no need to go down below the horizon of memory to see on the question before us a light to lighten the nations. We are just passing through a revolution which, though not a few "cast ominous conjecture on the whole success," has, by the benificence of its results, commanded the respect of all, and the earnest good-will of many who, in its beginning, thought some of its movers had wandered darkly from the sphere of religion, to disturb the independent and well-adjusted system of politics. Need I remind any that the temperance revolution, at its beginning, and for a while after, met, at almost every turn, the same objection which would now bring us to a stand, stifle the voice which our hearts are beginning to utter, and send us back to our homes, to be, as ministers, forever mute on a subject vital to the interests of our whole country, and blended with all that makes up the highest duty and lasting welfare of man? It was earnestly and strenuously contended that the

subject of temperance was exclusively political, that it was in the hands of the State, that the State had given to the seller and the drinker of a subtle and all-desolating poison the holy shield of law. Efforts most strenuous were made to bring the subject of temperance directly into the channel of party politics, for the very purpose often of stifling the pulpit and throwing back the wheel of that advancing cause. The result, however, was a triumph of moral power over opinions and feelings that took shelter behind the law, and claimed that the pulpit and other means of forming public sentiment should be silent, till, in some mysterious way, the law should undergo a change! I might here cite the reiterated testimony of ministerial bodies of almost every denomination, in every part of the country, against intemperance, and in favor of the revolutionary movements which have delivered so many from slavery to that vice; but the leading facts of the temperance revolution are so fresh in the memories of all, that I content myself with having barely suggested them to your notice, persuaded as I am that your personal intimacy with that enterprise will more than supply any deficiency of statement by me.

Before closing my remarks on the chief objection urged against the adoption of the Report of your Committee, let me advert to events which, by their identity in principle and measures, shed a clear and full light on the question before us. I allude to the abolition of the slave-trade and the subsequent abolition of slavery by the Parliament of Great Britain. Both of these acts were wrung from the civil arm by the resolute and persevering energy of moral principle. The contests were long and severe, and so connected were political interests and feelings with the question of abolishing those evils, that all moral influences which could be brought to bear upon it, were put in requisition. The ministry was not

silent. The pulpit thundered with denunciations of the abominable traffic and the abominable despotism. Ministers labored in the study, in the sanctuary, and often from town to town, throughout the kingdom, to aid in kindling, keeping alive and spreading that flame before which the sin of slavery was scorched and consumed. Nor did they always speak singly. The sin was denounced in the largest conventions of the clergy. Associations, conferences, presbyteries and synods sent forth a solemn voice and ceased not to lift it up till the work of deliverance was done. I know not whether the alarm of ecclesiastical interference with political questions was raised, but, if so, it was then and there, as it will be here, raised in vain. Men came forward to the great work of freedom promiscuously and by religious classes. Says Granville Sharpe, chairman of the Committee of the London Society for promoting the abolition of the slave-trade, in a letter dated February 28, 1788, just half a century ago, to the President* of the Pennsylvania Society for promoting the abolition of slavery and the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage,

"The clergy of the established church *in many parts*, have testified their zeal in the common cause. The Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists have petititioned *collectively*. The attempts to retrieve the national character and assert the common rights of nature, have awakened the attention and excited the good wishes of people of all descriptions."

Sir, the best part of the history of this land and of the world is luminous with the fact that the vindication of morals is the vindication of human rights, and that without the assertion of these rights those morals cannot be maintained. On the subject of a minister's duty in this matter, there is, to some extent, a looseness

* Dr. Franklin was President, and Dr. Rush was Secretary of the Society.

of thought not creditable to the general intelligence with which it is sometimes associated. The objection which is here urged is a restraint on religion and liberty. It is putting a yoke on our necks which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear. It has no authority in reason: it is not written in the oracles of God: it is not even the tradition of the elders: it has come newly up: surely I did not learn it when I sat at the feet of Gamaliel. The question of slavery, which must ere long be settled for the well-being or for the curse of this land, is one of those leading moral questions from which the minister of the gospel cannot keep away, without so far disowning his allegiance to God, and forsaking the welfare of man. No moral question of greater breadth or more practical importance will ever claim the attention of the mind, the conscience and the heart of this nation. It is a moral question of vast magnitude not only as it concerns the rights and the condition of the present millions in bondage, and their more numerous descendants, who, unless the question shall be soon adjusted, will wear a heavier chain, but on account of the corruption which slavery spreads among the white population of the States where it is cherished, the licentiousness which it brands on the face of that section of the country, the intolerant and ruthless temper which it breeds there, and the influence which those States must necessarily impart to the character of this nation. Compared with the permanent interest involved in the question of slavery, the fiscal and other political questions, which now perplex and agitate the country, are as bubbles on a breaking wave. Let these questions be settled as they may, the elastic enterprise of intelligent freedom will lift its head high and serene above the dashing tumult of the storm. Should the most alarmed apprehension be realized, should the wings of commerce be clipped, and the hope of toil languish, should the

genius of our country pine in sackcloth over the desolation of unblest counsels, time would replume those wings, revive that hope, repair those ravages, and deck with the bloom of health and the robe of joy her who sat in garments of sorrow: the next generation would not know the calamity of this, or would know it only as a beacon light whose gleams would warn them of the rocks where others' hopes had perished. Not such is the question of slavery. Let the question now raised be dropped, to be taken up by the next generation, and whatever difficulties now seem to perplex it would be multiplied, and that generation on whose hands its additional weight should be flung would criminate its predecessor and be more likely than the present to feel as if slavery were entailed upon it as a burden not to be thrown off, but to remain the growing curse of one generation after another.

The question of slavery, as are all moral questions, is vital both to temporal and spiritual interests. But if I might appeal to mere temporal interest on a broad scale, losing sight of those obligations which it is the province of interest to press on the attention and lead into the heart, it appears to me as if that alone should be enough to waken the most solemn thoughts of our country. But men often seem as if fated to look only on the present, or to regard the present and the future as one. Events which roll on by laws as fixed as those which govern the tides, seem as if riveted to distant stations. Present interests of narrow dimensions are brought so near the eye as to eclipse the brightest light of heaven. Men seem to think that the relations of the white and the colored population of this country will always continue as they are, whilst the foresight of a just God has been continually employed to change those relations, and his goodness has given neither sleep to its eyes nor slumber to its eyelids, that it might forewarn men of the issue

of his righteous providence. That population which is now held in abject bondage, instead of being two and a half millions, will, in a few years of a nation's life, equal the whole present population of our country. And what chain shall be strong enough to hold down in the dust fifteen millions of people, the bone and sinew of that portion of the land which they shall inhabit, men incited by that sympathy which, with the suddenness and the glow of electric fire, shall run through every bosom by the circuit of a common chain? Let stern necessity strengthen as it will the fetters of such a population, situated as it will be, and its giant strength will, when once moved, snap them as threads of tow. When such an event shall come, the doom will fall not only on that part of the land which has more directly and obviously trespassed on the just laws of God, but on that other part which has consented to be more than a silent accomplice in the guilt. While this doom, with all its lengthened preparation, with all the suddenness of impassioned energy, with all the elation of the first consciousness of power, and with all the vengeance of accumulated wrongs, will deal out its blind fury on all interests of the heart within the reach of its implacable arm, the blow will shake the whole land with fearful vibrations; the steady enterprise of freedom will stagger at the shock; the wheel, the loom, the multiplied implements of industry will pause in sad amazement, and fall in terrified homage before the righteous retribution of God. If, then, the minister of a spiritual kingdom may not plead for the oppressed, if he may not fervently, and before the world, singly or associated, respond to the call of humanity, if he is to be silenced and driven off by the voice of political party, from what source of influence may be expected the rescue of millions from the most atrocious oppression, and our country from the judgments of that God who will vindicate his government from such outrage on his subjects?

But I hear a voice which admonishes me that this is a CONVENTION! a CONVENTION! And what of it? It is not the number of persons surely, who declare their sentiments, that makes a declaration liable to just objection. The question on any subject will not, with a reasonable man, be, who, or how many speak? but, what is spoken? The inquiry of such an one will be, are the declared sentiments just? Are they for or against liberty? Do they arrogate exclusive power either to individuals or to distinct classes of men? Do they deny, or do they vindicate the rights of men, the principles of universal and inalienable liberty? These are the questions which intelligent and honest men will ask, and on their answer, for one, I am willing to stand or fall.

And here, Mr. President, it is not out of place to say, that it is the privilege of the ministers of this county, beyond most others, to live in a community justly characterized by intelligence and by that independence of mind which follows a sound understanding, and not among those who are shouted about in droves, and come at the call of a herdsman. It is our habit to address the understandings of the people with the desire and the expectation that they will make up their minds for themselves. We feel that truth, on whatever subject, whether the liberty wherewith Christ, or the liberty wherewith man makes free, is always the gainer when it comes to men who will inquire, what are the principles set forth for their consideration, what are the facts by which those principles are supported, and who will make up their minds by the light of a calm understanding. With such men I am more than willing to leave the issue of such questions.

Does any one inquire why we meet in convention? The object of our meeting is comprehensively and justly stated in the call which brought us together. It is neither more nor less than "*to*

express our sentiments on the subject of slavery." This is the controlling, the single purpose of our meeting. Our object in expressing our sentiments on that subject is, to throw our united influence against a system of oppression which weighs, with insupportable heaviness, on a sixth part of our countrymen, a system which implicates, corrupts, disgraces and endangers our whole country, and which, if not soon destroyed, will bring down upon this nation the most calamitous judgments of God. In order to express our sentiments faithfully we meet in convention and gather the light of each other's minds on the momentous subject. We wish, after due interchange of thought, to express our deliberate judgment in the most suitable form; and we wish to do this as a body for the same reason that other men speak together. It more attracts the public mind to what is spoken. That any question seems important to many, leads often to inquiry by others into the principles, facts, or measures which are set forth as important, but which, if presented by an individual, would not be so likely to gain an attentive consideration. We wish to speak as a body, that in this way our true sentiments may be known by those who either doubt what they are, or who, by false lights, are persuaded that they are what they are not, and who cannot know our sentiments collectively unless they are collectively expressed. This is due to them, to ourselves, and to the community in which we live. In this way, too, if our influence is anything, and worth anything, can we exert it more effectually, because more extensively. Some of us are acquainted with the fact, from authentic, though not published intelligence, that the opinions of the clergy of this State are used, in certain parts of the south, to sustain the system of slavery, and as we cannot consent to a misapprehension so unjust to ourselves, and, we hope, to most of our brethren in this Commonwealth, we wish to

take this, as the most convenient as well as the most effectual way to disabuse the minds of such as defame us for the support of unlimited tyranny. The insinuation, from whatever quarter, whether in or out of this hall, that this meeting was called or exists with the contemplation of any influence from it, directly or indirectly, in favor of any political party, or any political or other aspiration of any individual, is unmanly, as being utterly destitute of foundation in truth, or of any reasonable ground of suspicion, and can have been bred only of rank jealousy, or of that moral debasement which can appreciate no worthier motives than its own.

And now, sir, let me throw a passing glance on the objection offered by another member, that if this convention shall express its sentiments on the subject of slavery, it will awaken jealousies! it will beget *apprehensions of danger to liberty!* I greatly marvel that such an assertion could find its way into this hall; that it had the courage to look this intelligent assembly in the face. Such objections are fancies, mere whims. Who, or what must he be in whose bosom such jealousy or such fear can find room? What man of sober, honest thought would not blush to say that *he* entertained such jealousy and such apprehension? It is possible that here and there an individual may be found by that member, who is willing, for base purposes, to scatter seeds of jealousy and discontent; but in a community like this in which we live, let him be assured that, if he reap at all, it will be a blighted harvest. What! dangerous to liberty to assert the rights of man! Dangerous to liberty to plead for men in chains! Dangerous to liberty to proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof! Dangerous to liberty to vindicate the principles of universal emancipation! Then, sir, was the Declaration of American Independence dangerous to liberty. Then tell me, I pray you, what miracle has saved

the liberties of this Commonwealth from the Bill of Rights written on the open front of its Constitution? But I dismiss the subject. To pursue it were to offer an indignity to this Convention. To argue it soberly would suffer to be called in question the intelligence and the honor of this county.

I turn to an objection that has somewhat of the semblance of truth, but which yet is not to be trusted for its comely form. It is said that ministers should let the subject of slavery alone, and preach the great principles of the gospel, letting Christianity in this unobtrusive way operate on the minds of men, and gradually bring about the emancipation of the slaves. Beautiful dream! Fair but unsubstantial vision! How long must this indirect and gradual process go on before the work of emancipation shall be done? If the past throws any light on the future, these gradations all tread backward. Slavery itself is the most formidable hindrance to the progress of Christianity, and the more time is given to that deadly foe of a moral kingdom, the broader and deeper will be its entrenchments. Just where slavery gets the firmest foothold, just there will it most weaken, till it finally displace a religion of goodwill to men. Slavery coils round the genius of Christianity, and if she do not soon strangle it, with a violence of effort, it will crush and devour her. Why take a blind and circuitous route? There is nothing zigzag in the path of Christianity. Her eyes look right on, and her eyelids look straight before her. Stealth is neither her principle nor her power. Her work is not done in a corner. When she speaks, she speaks to the point. When she calls sinners to repentance, she tells them what to repent of. She shews to the people their transgressions, and to the house of Jacob their sins. She cries aloud and spares not. When she has broken the sceptre of any tyrant sin, she has grasped it with decision; she

has wrenched it away, and broken it with the strength of her obvious arm. Without this decision the world had been ruined beyond hope.

Why, sir, is the work of emancipation delayed? Is not slavery gaining strength every hour? Has it not, encouraged by vague generalities, been spreading itself, with its legions of wrongs and miseries, by night and by day, age after age? Does not its own nature, does not its whole history show the need of strong pressure upon it? Is there not an earnest call to all the friends, and especially to the ministers of a holy religion, to proclaim the rights of men and denounce the crime of slavery? And what else stops men's breath but the extreme need of speaking out, everywhere, their boldest thoughts? Yes, it is the magnitude of the evil that makes men cautious and dumb. It is the natural impudence of slavery, become more brazen by indulgence, that makes freedom so reluctant and shamefaced. I repeat it, it is the enormity of the evil that makes tongues mute that should break forth as thunder. It is because slavery holds so many, so widely, so entirely, and so habitually in its fierce grasp. If the crime of slavery were less magnificent than it is; if, instead of being spread over thirteen States, it covered only the State of Connecticut, or Rhode-Island, or even the ten miles square now the nation's emporium of slavery; if the blight of this sin on manhood and its hopes, instead of falling on two and a half millions, fell on only twenty thousand of our countrymen; if slavery struck only the body, instead of shedding mildew on the soul; if, instead of being hoary with age, it had sprung up but yesterday, all eyes would be bent upon it; men would not be called upon to circumnavigate the globe to wind around the unsuspecting monster a thread of gossamer; they would snatch the weapons that lie nigh them, even in their hearts;

they would pierce it with a storm of arrows; they would destroy it from the land with universal execration.

The next lion in our way, and which comes up as from the swelling of Jordan, is the EXCITEMENT! We are earnestly admonished to shun it, lest it devour us. For one, I have no desire to encounter it. I would not unnecessarily place myself in its way; but if in the path of duty I meet it, I am told, on the highest authority, not to give place to it. Besides, is it not of that kind, which, if we resist it, will flee from us?

I am aware that excitement is, of itself, evidence neither for nor against any cause. It is incidental to the movements of ambition and of virtue: it may be for or against liberty. We are not to decide on the merits of any cause by either the excitement or the stillness that accompanies it. An excitement may be the object of just censure or of just commendation; and a calm may be even more fatal than a storm. We are to look at that which is the occasion or the object of excitement, before we determine the character of the excitement itself.

The objection which we here meet, is one that is ever met in attempting to destroy any sin that has endured long and spread wide. We look in vain, through the history of man, for any great reformation which has not encountered opposition. No purity of motive can calm it off; no seal of Heaven can gain its respect; no measure of beneficence is proof against its malice. Which of the prophets was not persecuted for righteousness' sake? The spotless Son of God was, fiercely and with mortal hatred, accused of stirring up the people and perverting the nation. The public prosecutor, before the corrupt Felix, denounced Paul as a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, a ringleader of the sect that was everywhere spoken against. They who were divinely commissioned to

reinstate a fallen world, were mobbed for turning it upside down. Christianity started on her errand of good-will in a tempest of the most malignant passions. From their fierce assault hardly was she relieved, before night — her foulest enemy — came down upon her. After wandering dimly through ages of darkness, the day scarcely broke and she resumed her benign message, when she was again assailed by the stormy violence of avarice, licentiousness, and despotism, in their most frantic moods.

But here I am reminded that the excitement during the progress of the Reformation in Europe, was not confined to the enemies of Christianity. True. Her friends were deeply, justly, and necessarily excited. In the struggle of light and darkness, intense anxiety filled all minds. In this eventful crisis of the world's best hopes and darkest fears, all Europe stood embattled. Says the eloquent historian * of that period, "The human mind roused of a sudden, and became inquisitive, mutinous and disdainful of the yoke to which it had hitherto submitted." The deep and wide excitement he calls "a wonderful ferment and agitation of mind." He says that "the spirit of innovation broke out in every part of Europe with various degrees of violence," and that "even in Spain and Italy, symptoms appeared of the same disposition to throw off the yoke."

When opposite principles meet, each with opposite interests under its protection, the severity of the conflict must be measured by the depth of those principles and the amount of those interests, present or prospective. Earnestness begets earnestness; virtue becomes sterner by resistance; necessity gives her strength, and with it heavier weapons. Inveterate habits, if voluntary, are another name for inveterate attachments. Great present interests,

* Robertson.

real or supposed, do not let go their hold of great sins without a violent struggle. Whatever interest is bred by sin will,

> "when scaring sounds molest,
> Cling close and closer to its mother's breast,"

and strengthen an attachment founded not only in maternal cares, but in mutual hopes. While the world gives silent assent to the system of slavery, it will last. A sin so strong by the force of nature and habit, and so confident by the delusions of hope, will yield only to the utmost strength of the world's resolute hand. This is obvious from the jealousy awakened by the most silent approach to it. The slightest touch of its extremity irritates a nerve that reaches the seat of life and excites it into an attitude of envenomed resentment. This excitement will last so long as it sees that the world fears it. Hesitation or wide circuits round it will give it courage. When it sees, beyond a doubt, that the world hates it and means its death, is in earnest and will not flinch, but is rising to bring down upon it a blow that will need no second, it will, like every other sin, first quail and then flee from off the earth down into its cave of everlasting darkness. That slavery will forsake even our republican soil without deep and wide excitement will not be looked for by him who has read even the most meagre chapter of the human mind. To stay in it without excitement is equally impossible. Present quiet will only prepare for deeper agitation. The excitement which is now so much feared, has already been too long delayed. Come it must, sooner or later, in one manner or another; and if put off to the farthest possible point — a distance not very remote — it will at last come, on our whole land, in the shape of judgments which no wisdom shall be able to shun and no penitence plead off.

I come now to what is called the constitutional objection. One

member finds, or thinks he finds, a bar to our proceeding, in the Constitution of the United States. He thinks he finds there a national political sanction of slavery, — something that forbids a disturbance of that unblest institution, — something, I suppose, that not only should shut up all mouths, but seal up all eyes, quench all hearts, and cancel all obligations this side of Mason's and Dixon's line. Sir, if our silence were guaranteed by solemn compact, if this were the letter and the spirit of the Constitution, and that beyond all possible doubt, it would only show that men have adopted a constitution of civil government which conflicts with the constitution of nature, and sets at defiance the government of God. Such a constitution of civil government would, so far, be void by a prior and immutable law. If slavery were incorporated by closest intimacy with the national polity, we should be the more earnestly engaged to break up the alliance. If the Constitution had raised a bar across the pathway to that sin, that bar should be overleaped. With the Constitution for a shield, it should be pierced through the Constitution itself. Whatever compact is framed against the law of God, however stately and skillful the frame-work, will fall by its rottenness, and, if not seasonably abandoned, crush the interests it was reared to protect. But where, I ask, is the article, where the scrap of the Constitution which either by letter demands, or in spirit contemplates the silence which is here enjoined? The cautious words of that wary instrument guard it from all just suspicion of such intent. Instead of giving its sanction to slavery, it scrupulously shuns the recognition of its being; it abhors the mention even of its name. The most that can truly be said is that it uses circumlocutions, which, by their large compass, take in slavery as actual or possible, as something that might or might not be; that it lays the basis of representation so broad as to include all

persons comprehended within the indefinite range of such circumlocutions; and that legal operation in no State shall infringe the claim, legal in any other State, to the service of any of its inhabitants escaping from it, but shall deliver up such fugitive, "on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due," silently acknowledging, to each State and to all the people, what indeed no one would then have been bold enough to question, the liberty of opinion and of speech which had been enjoyed and used, with advantages then best known, as an inalienable and inestimable birthright. Had an article to shackle that liberty or impede its freest gait, been found or suspected in the Constitution as conceived by the body in which its lineaments were fashioned, as a hidden untimely birth it had not been. At that day, when the sea of liberty was at its flood, the Constitution with such a weight upon it had sunk as lead in the mighty waters. We do our fathers wrong, we dishonor their well-earned renown, we wrong ourselves out of their best legacy, if we entertain, or silently suffer, such suspicion of their principles. So far from attempting, or thinking it possible or desirable to seal up men's lips, they expected that freemen would speak freely on the subject of slavery, and that, from all quarters, a harmonious influence would, before this, have been successfully exerted to do away, utterly and forever, that which is an unsparing war on man, a foul and detestable blot on our country, and an insufferable affront to God. They spoke freely of slavery, not merely as a calamity to be deplored, or as a curse to be dreaded, but as a sin to be forsaken; and, had they anticipated its continuance and growth, their anxiety for the nation's conscience would not have found quiet till they had secured for the slave deliverance from his wrongs. But means of its support and growth which their forecast did not reach, have risen up to prolong its life and enlarge its

dominion. It has insinuated itself among new and diversified interests of business; it has entwined itself more closely with the hopes of ambition; it has glided into new and unthought of territory; it has wreathed its folds round states deemed the mightiest of the free; it has been suffered to bask in the sunshine of the Constitution, and at this moment

"hope elevates and joy
Brightens its crest,"

as it eagerly looks into the Eden* of the new world, and waits to beguile freedom of her pureness and drive her a hopeless exile from her fresh abode.

The last objection which I shall notice, comes to us with an aspect claiming our attention and pleading for our sympathy. It wears a mingled look of troubled solemnity and importunate deprecation: it expresses the alarm that such action as the call of this Convention contemplates, will, by feeding the flame which the love of freedom has already enkindled, and repelling the wonted emotions of southern good-will, rend asunder the Union, and plunge the hopes of the country into the awful chasm which such convulsion shall open in the midst of us. This is the substance of the boding objection to which the purpose of our meeting is importuned to give way. It is worthy of grave consideration. Coming to us with the air and tone of afflicted sincerity, it should receive our most attentive regard. If we may not yield that instant compliance which would at once change its countenance, let us at least say, Come, let us reason together. I would meet it by the inquiry, whether this anxiety is bred of reason, or of imagination? Comes it from a consideration of the weakness of freedom and the power

* A name sometimes used to describe Texas.

of slavery? May not the conviction have been wrought in the mind by a willingness to find duty in some other path than that where God has placed it in our way, and by a conscious fear of a spirit which raves the loudest when it most feels the need of overpowering its own convictions of guilt; a cloud of wind which lowers the darker because its shrivelled hand grasps no bolt of thunder? Has the objection comprehended the resources of free, intelligent enterprise and virtue? Has it inquired whether the free States alone have not far greater power than belonged to all the States which, "to secure the blessings of liberty," formed the Union? Has it thought whether the free States are not, for all domestic interests, far more closely associated now than were any number of the States when our present national compact was framed? Has it paused to ask whether in the free States there is enough of sagacity to profit by the experience of half a century, and whether, with that experience, they would not, in case of a severance from the rest, remain united with the same essential principles of government, and with habitual attachments strengthened by the peculiarity of their new condition and relations, by the idendity of character which would exist among themselves, and by the discrepancy of character which would distinguish them from others? Has the objection considered whether States, united by compact, gather strength from that accordance of interests which identifies their policy and keeps it from sudden and disastrous fluctuations? Has its excited and alarmed imagination left memory so far behind as to lose sight of free interests tampered with, periled, and laid prostrate by an unsympathising and reckless association? Has it surveyed politically and morally the geography of the free and the slave States, in masses and in detail, and cautiously computed their relations, tendencies, and probable influence on each other, both pres-

ent and future? Has it passed along from the Atlantic shore of the Ancient Dominion up the Blue Ridge, and looked down upon the eager wants of a large part of the population in the vale which it overlooks? Or, pressing on to the summit of the Atlantic slope, has its inquiring eye explored the strong propensities and growing power of western Virginia, and wandered onward over the plains and along the vales of free-spirited Kentucky? Has it had leisure, in its broad and rapid excursions, to bestow a passing glance on those minuter geographical divisions which characterize the free States, but which cannot be where slavery thrives, parceling out those States into innumerable municipalities, each a miniature republic, with advantages for improvement of every kind, physical, intellectual, social, and moral? Has the scope of its inquiry been wide enough to take in the question, where, or whether, the seam can be found which is to be followed in ripping the Union, by those who have either ambitiously desired or stoutly threatened to unstitch it? What discovery has it made of the effect of a severance on slavery itself? Has it taken the pains to be informed whether anything would more certainly work the deliverance of the slave on the borders of a free territory, and thus extend the limits of freedom, than drawing the line of distinct national government, and thus marking still more definitely than before the contiguous light and shade of opposite systems of policy, and exciting a still more jealous attention to freedom's wakeful mind, and busy hand, and frugal thrift, and well-requited toil? Has it calmly thought how much the prosperity of states and nations depends on confidence at home and abroad in the security of property, and how surely a rupture of the Union would instantly depress all that is deemed property at the south, whether houses or lands or chattels of flesh and spirit, and as suddenly enhance

the value of every rood of soil pressed only by the foot of freedom? Has it narrowly inspected the nature of slavery, and marked the certainty with which it stints the revenues of a state by exhausting the sources of wealth, and considered how swift is the lapse of time which will at last transfer the ownership of the soil to him who tills it, and the power of the master into the hand of the slave? Has it ever thought whether the Union and slavery are repellent principles, or put the question, how long is it possible, with the utmost forbearance, for freedom and slavery to live together under the same government? Has it counted the liabilities of the free States to mingle in the tragic strife which the settled laws of Providence will, if slavery is persisted in, bring about, and which they are every year silently leading on? But perhaps even here the distant contemplation of the fearful scene has been so shocking to the heart that the eye of reason has not been steady enough to meet it? I can easily believe that such an event is too sober to be taken into the account, or that the heart's delusive power has thrown it to a distance so remote as to make it dimly seen and appear too far off to be overtaken by the unseen and silent foot of time. I know that the imagination startles and the stoutest heart grows faint before the dim outline of such a picture; but if the representation, whether faint or bold, be the image of what will be or may be, we should invoke the aid of reason to give us courage to look at it with a calm and sober discretion. That is a purblind policy which shuns the contemplation of any possible consequences. Inevitable evils are not to be kept before the mind any farther than is necessary to prepare to suffer them, or to use them for ulterior good; but evils to be avoided, though distant, are to be watched with a vigilance proportioned to their magnitude. When called upon to consider the subject, the Union is to be looked at not as

a name, but as a thing; not for what it has been, but for what it is or is likely to be; not for its partial, but its general benefits or evils; not for the causes which formed it, but for those which demand its continuance or its cessation; not for its physical uses merely, but for its conjoined moral good, its fitness to secure the largest and the most lasting welfare. As the Union should cover this broad policy, it should be surveyed with a comprehensive eye. It should be looked at by the steady sunlight of just principles, and not by the gleam or the glare of flaring passions.

The inquiries I have put as a key to others, are put to meet an assumption, and not for the sake of proving the advantages of a dissolution of the Union. I go for no wanton experiment. I prefer the dead level of safe experience to putting my foot in the dark over a possible infinity. Neither will I take for granted the certainty or probability of predicted evil either in kind or degree. The objection to which queries have been proposed is an assumption both of the fact of disunion, on a given contingency, and of the direction of its consequences. It is fair then, as well as a native propensity, to be inquisitive about it. But, with all those free inquiries, I am no advocate for unconditional dissolution of the Union, or for its separation for slight causes. If it may righteously be, let it be, as long as the world standeth; or, at least, let it be till between the Atlantic and the Pacific waves its unknown millions shall crowd along its countless streams, shall swarm in its capacious vales, shall teem on its broad and fertile plains, shall shout to each other from all its mountains and hills; till, with God's blessing on its free and virtuous principles, its intelligent enterprise and untiring industry, it shall have so multiplied and spread the means of social existence that the eye of no single government

can overlook the expanse, and the arm of no single power poise the mighty burden of its interests.

But there are bounds to hope and bounds to duty. While we bear in mind the price of union; while we keep steadily before us all that we can know of its original necessity, of the wisdom and patriotism which devised and framed it, of the mutual concessions which effected it, of the forbearance which has refrained from harming it, and of the benefits which have cemented it together; while we give wide room to the inbred habit of cherishing the Union, neither any nor all of these considerations should keep us from seeing whatever else may be seen, or allow us to reverence it as the giver of every good and perfect gift. It is but the creature, and, however worthy of our esteem and gratitude, is not to be worshipped and served as the Creator, God over all. Great benefits may lead to great sins. There is danger of making too high, as well as too low an estimate of worldly good however great, and forming from it a standard of duty that shall not tally with the rule of God.

Doubtless the Union has been the means of great and incalculable good. That it has been a means also of great evil is, perhaps, not less clear. The good may have far outrun the evil. Be it so. It is not therefore the fountain of living waters — it is not therefore the standard of truth, or to be preserved at the expense of duty to God and of the rights of men. It is not, on account of past services, however great and manifest, to be cherished as the protector and participator of wrong, immeasurable but still growing wrong. It is not to live that it may guard the rights and support the interests of a part of our countrymen, while it mocks the wrongs inflicted, without respite and without stint, on a sixth part of our

countrymen entitled, by the endowments of the same God, to the same benefits which are justly claimed from it by any part of our nation.

The lasting beneficence of a constitution of civil government is not to be measured by the breadth of territory which it covers; by the denseness of the population which stands on it; by the commerce whose bright wings glance over the waves of every sea, or flutter in every haven of the world; by the din of industry at every waterfall; by the herds and flocks of unnumbered hills; by the villages that rise, like exhalations, in the wilderness; by the avenues of nature and art which interlace the broad land; or by the intelligence which beams out of every eye. There is a strength in the heart of man, given by the Spirit of God, mightier than the shields of the mighty; there is an armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left brighter than the gleam of millions of bayonets, and more potent and terrible than the blaze and the thunder of ten thousand cannon; there is a wealth in upright hearts, which, in peace, is more a nation's good, and, in war, is more a nation's sinew than all the coffers of countless revenues; there is a wisdom from above, full of mercy and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, which denies that the wisdom of this world is power, and which alone can say, "I have strength."* This wisdom, the fear of God, the knowledge of the holy, is better than weapons of war: length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. In a union of upright hearts a nation cannot but prosper till the constitution of nature shall be broken up — till God shall forsake his holy government. In such a union there is a power that puts to flight the armies of the aliens — an invincibility

* Proverbs, viii, 14.

before which the world cowers with conscious weakness. In such hearts there is a majesty with which unjust constitutions and laws intermeddle not; to which righteous compacts and enactments bow as to the spirit that girds them with strength. When the genius of a nation is a spirit of righteousness it will bring her to honor; when of injustice, to shame and everlasting contempt.

As I would not overrate, I would not undervalue the Union. With me it has been an object of strong attachment. Whoever has loved it much, none has loved it more. The fervor and constancy of this love are the effect of early attachment and habitual contemplation of its worth. I had not thought that so much could be done which threatens to chill an affection so warm. But that which takes not its rise from blind impulse is not likely to continue by it. That which is raised and supported by perception of worth, will of course fall when that support gives way. As I would cherish the Union while it serves "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, and secure the blessings of liberty," so I would repudiate the Union when it fails to attain all or any of these objects. I can view with calmness the separation of States whose bond of union is a chain of slavery of the tongue, of the press, and of the heart's best power. I can say, if such are to be the practical conditions of union let the States be severed: write a bill of divorcement from the bond of an impure wedlock. If such are, in effect, the terms of union, let it fall asunder: let the dissolved elements re-unite into separate masses according to their affinities for freedom or for slavery. If it has come to this, that the price of union is to be dumb when God calls for a voice, to be silent when the groans of millions in bondage fall on the hearts of millions of freemen; if we may not speak out our minds against the most horrible atrocity with which earth is afflicted, let

not the price be paid: it is spending the treasures of the heart for that which satisfieth not. In such alternative let the Union expire, though the giving up of the ghost be with a nation's agony. It is but the separation of corruptible dust from incorruptible spirit. The clay will dissolve, but the spirit will join a new and glorious body: it shall go forth in freedom, no more clogged with its weight of sin: it shall return with songs and everlasting joy.

Should the discussion of slavery, here and elsewhere, be followed by a dissolution of the Union, the responsibility will rest on that which demands the discussion, but which cannot bear it. Should the Union be lost, principle will be safe. Nor will disunion stop the work of emancipation. It will quicken it. It will give new advantages for carrying on the work. Should sinful passions stretch a belt of fire between the free and the slave States, from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore, truth would overleap it, and time would quench it. The limits of states and empires can neither hem in nor shut out light. The age, the condition of the world, its business, its new and swifter pursuits, its nearer and ever-moving intercourse, will go forward and not backward, bearing with them new constitutions and relations of society. The movements of God's providence are bringing nations together to see eye to eye and speak face to face. Mind can never more be contraband to mind. To attempt, by disunion, to keep a part of the world from the rest and to shroud off the sun of righteousness from its conscience, will be as keeping off, by disunion, the light of day when the sun shineth in his strength.

I cannot conclude without expressing my astonishment that any attempt should be made to hinder the freest utterance of our sentiments, the loudest burst of indignant hearts against the foul crime of slavery. If in New-England, where Freedom has loved to dwell,

and where, as the almoner of God's bounty, she has quenched the people's thirst from the smitten rock, and made them suck honey out of the flinty rock, — if, in the heart of this free Commonwealth, the ministers of Heaven's word shall, from a blind policy, a faint heart, or a mistaken sense of duty, refuse to remonstrate against slavery in our land, one would think that nature itself would speak out; that the forests would murmur and sigh; that the rocks would cry out from the mountains; that the hearts of these hills would throb with audible pulsations; that these vallies would wail with unsleeping echoes; and the broad atmosphere be filled with the cries of Freedom, in agony for the crushed and bleeding slave, and in sadness over the children she has nourished and brought up, but which have rebelled against her.

But I trust that our coming together is a true response to the call that has summoned us hither. I trust that the ministers of a spiritual kingdom are met to testify of slavery that it is preeminently an evil work, an abominable thing which the Lord hateth. I trust that from this Convention a solemn call will go forth that shall meet and mingle with the voices of our brethren in other parts of the country, to wake a nation sleeping over its grave, to startle it with the nearness of its everlasting destruction, and to join with the voice of nature and of God in the rescue of humanity from its unrelenting foe.